



Equity Labs

Arkansas is focused on ensuring that every student has access to a team of effective teachers and effective leaders. The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has developed a network of Equity Labs that will:

1. Increase awareness among school districts of the educational equity issues in our state;
2. Increase district use of local data to identify equity gaps and root causes and create plans to address those gaps; and
3. Increase district Workforce Stability Index (WSI) through the use of effective strategies such as improved recruiting and placement practices, and cultural responsiveness.

To achieve these outcomes, the Equity Labs will explore issues and data concerning equity both at a personal level and at the school and district levelS with local educational stakeholders. Educational stakeholders will include teachers, leaders, local school board members, parents, state leaders, and representatives from the business community, educator preparation programs, and education service cooperatives who will explore how to serve as a community of practice that will continue to focus on educational equity issues.

The ADE Equity Labs will compare the WSI with the student demographics within each school in a district to determine whether there is a significance difference in the rates at which students of minority or low-income households are being served by inexperienced, ineffective, or out-of-field teachers.

The ADE intends to follow up the Equity Labs with opportunities for technical assistance at state conferences and at other times arranged with participating districts. Teacher leaders will also be trained to continue the equity work at their districts and at the school level.

The agenda for the Equity Labs consists of a full six-hour day with planned time for school district stakeholders to examine the school district's WSI and other student and workforce data, draw conclusions about equity issues from that data, and consider root causes. The ADE will introduce a toolkit that the school district can use to develop an LEA plan for equitable access to effective educators.

School districts that the ADE identifies as having significant difference in rates of students from low-income households or minority students being served by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers will be required to develop a plan for equitable access to effective educators to address the disproportionality. The ADE will discuss strategies for addressing equity issues, and focus on strategies that it will support, such as the effective use of federal monies, Opportunity Culture schools, cultural responsiveness training, equity audits, and the effective use of teacher leaders.

Equity Labs will be implemented on the following timeline:

- Introductory meeting with Teacher Leaders, January 2018;
- Training for implementation teams, Spring 2018;
- Introductory session for education service cooperatives, Spring 2018;
- Two small rural school districts, Spring 2018;
- One large urban school district, Summer 2018;
- A minimum of 15 per school year held at each education service cooperative (5-6 school districts at each) beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

Data from pre- and post-lab surveys from stakeholders will be used to inform and continuously improve the Equity Labs. The ADE Equity Labs team consists of a core group from the Educator Effectiveness Division and a larger team composed of members from multiple ADE divisions. This will allow for consistent and efficient planning, and will draw from the strengths of all educational areas (special education, research and technology, equity office, English Speakers of Other Languages, migrant education, etc.)